

Message Text

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PAGE 01 VALLET 01404 241749Z

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PDIP, PFOR, MT

SUBJ: MALTESE PRESS CARRIES CONFLICTING REPORTS ON THE
DEPARTURE OF BRITISH DIPLOMAT

REF: VALLETTA 1380

1. ON NOVEMBER 24, THREE MALTESE NEWSPAPERS REPORTED CONFLICTING REASONS FOR THE UNEXPECTED DEPARTURE TEN DAYS AGO OF THE ACTING BRITISH HIGH COMMISSIONER IN MALTA, ARTHUR H. WYATT. THE THREE PAPERS WERE THE MALTESE-LANGUAGE NAZZJON PSOLISHED BY THE OPPOSITION NATIONALIST PARTY, THE MALTESE-LANGUAGE HAJJA ISSUED BY THE CATHOLIC CHURCH, AND THE INDEPENDENT ENGLISH-LANGUAGE TIMES OF MALTA. IN ESSENCE, THE NEWS REPORTS INDICATED THAT WYATT HAD LEFT BECAUSE OF "DIFFICULTIES" WITH THE MALTESE GOVERNMENT, BUT THEY ALSO INCLUDED A DENIAL BY THE MALTESE DEPARTMENT OF INFORMATION THAT THE GOM HAD DEMANDED WYATT'S DEPARTURE.

2. THE TEXT OF THE REPORT IN NAZZJON, WHICH WAS CARRIED AS ITS HEADLINE STORY ON THE FRONT PAGE, IS AS FOLLOWS:

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PAGE 02 VALLET 01404 241749Z

BEGIN TEXT: TERMINATION OF APPOINTMENT OF DEPUTY

BRITISH HIGH COMMISSIONER

DIFFERENT VERSIONS BY THE PARTIES CONCERNED

REPORTS FROM LONDON AND AN OFFICIAL SPOKESMAN FOR THE MALTESE GOVERNMENT'S DEPARTMENT OF INFORMATION YESTERDAY HAD DIFFERENT VERSIONS ON THE TERMINATION OF THE APPOINTMENT OF MR. ARTHUR WYATT IN MALTA, WHERE HE WAS SERVING AS DEPUTY HIGH COMMISSIONER AND COUNSELLOR OF THE BRITISH HIGH COMMISSION IN MALTA.

REPORTS FROM LONDON SAID YESTERDAY THAT MR. WYATT, WHO DEPARTED FROM MALTA ON NOVEMBER 14 AFTER SERVING IN MALTA SINCE MARCH 1975, WAS REMOVED FOLLOWING A REQUEST BY THE MALTESE GOVERNMENT, AS THE LATTER FELT THAT IT WAS NOT POSSIBLE TO CONDUCT OFFICIAL BUSINESS WITH THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT THROUGH WYATT.

THE SAME REPORTS SAID THAT THE MALTESE GOVERNMENT GAVE NO REASON FOR THIS. WYATT WILL NOW BE GIVEN ANOTHER DIPLOMATIC POST BY THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT.

A SPOKESMAN FOR THE BRITISH HIGH COMMISSION IN MALTA NEITHER DENIED NOR CONFIRMED THE REPORT.

WHEN WE TELEPHONED THE DEPARTMENT OF INFORMATION AND INQUIRED WHETHER IT WAS TRUE THAT MR. WYATT WAS REMOVED FROM MALTA FOLLOWING PROTESTS FROM THE MALTESE GOVERNMENT THE REPLY WE HAD FROM THE DIRECTOR OF INFORMATION, MR. TONI PELLEGRINI, WAS TEXTUALLY THIS:

"FROM INFORMATION OBTAINED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF INFORMATION FROM THE MALTESE GOVERNMENT IT DOES NOT RESULT THAT THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT TRANSFERRED MR. ARTHUR WYATT BECAUSE IT WAS FORCED TO DO THIS BY THE MALTESE GOVERNMENT.

"IT SEEMS THAT THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT HAS GIVEN ANOTHER DIPLOMATIC APPOINTMENT TO MR. WYATT. THIS IS NORMAL IN THE DIPLOMATIC SERVICE." END TEXT.
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PAGE 03 VALLET 01404 241749Z

3. COMMENT: IN ADDITION, THE CHURCH NEWSPAPER HAJJA ADDED THAT WYATT'S SUDDEN DEPARTURE WAS SIMILAR TO THE RECENT WITHDRAWAL OF ITALIAN FIRST SECRETARY DOTT. GUIDO SCALICI FROM MALTA (REFTEL). HAJJA POINTED OUT THAT IT HAD NOT BEEN POSSIBLE TO CONFIRM THE REASONS FOR SCALICI'S DEPARTURE, ALTHOUGH IT HAD "BEEN ALLEGED" THAT THE MALTESE GOVERNMENT HAD "FOUND SOME DIFFICULTY" WITH

SCALICI. THUS FAR, THERE HAS BEEN NO MENTION OF THE
STORIES CONCERNING SCALICI OR WYATT IN ANY OF THE PRO-
MALTA LABOR PARTY NEWSPAPERS, OR ON MALTESE RADIO OR
TELEVISION. END COMMENT. WIGGINS

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